



STRATEGIC PLAN

**2022
2027**



CALIFORNIA SECRETARY OF STATE

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Letter From the Secretary



I am pleased to present the 2022-2027 California Secretary of State Strategic Plan.

The Secretary of State's office (SOS) is comprised of nearly 500 people who are dedicated to making government more transparent and accessible in the areas of elections, business, political campaigning, legislative advocacy, and historical records.

As California's Secretary of State, it is my honor to ensure transparency and fairness in government. It is our job and mission to bring the people of California reliable information, keep accurate and complete records, and expand the value of this office to all. The Secretary of State is more than a repository of information. We strive to guarantee people the relief, hope, and honesty they are entitled to by our society. We want this office to be accessible and helpful to the everyday small businesses, to the change-maker trying to better their community, and to the voter seeking to exercise their individual power. To this end, our team has worked collectively to create our strategic plan to bring about our vision to better serve the people of California.

Thank you,

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shirley N. Weber".

Shirley N. Weber, Ph.D.
California Secretary of State



Vision Statement

We improve the lives of Californians and businesses by going above and beyond to foster trust in democracy, share our state's rich history, promote economic growth, and invest in our future.

Mission Statement

Adhering to the highest standards of integrity and transparency, the California Secretary of State supports businesses, strengthens democracy, protects individual rights and preserves our state's history by delivering quality services, accessible resources, and trusted information.

Core Values

We are committed to:

1. Integrity

We hold ourselves to the highest ethical standards.

2. Innovation

We pursue new and more efficient ways of doing business and approach each challenge and opportunity creatively.

3. Trust

We are a reliable resource.

4. Superior Service

We go above and beyond to make peoples' lives better.

5. Empowerment

We seek to provide education, opportunity, and inclusion for the public and SOS staff.

6. Teamwork

We work in a collaborative manner with courtesy and mutual respect.



Our Organization

The Secretary of State's responsibilities include:

- 1.** Serving as the state's Chief Elections Officer
- 2.** Implementing electronic filing and Internet disclosure of campaign and lobbyist financial information
- 3.** Maintaining business filings
- 4.** Commissioning notaries public
- 5.** Operating the Safe at Home confidential address program
- 6.** Maintaining the Domestic Partners and Advance Health Care Directive Registries
- 7.** Safeguarding the State Archives
- 8.** Serving as a trustee of the California Museum



Divisions of the Secretary of State's Office





Elections:

The Elections Division oversees all federal and state elections within California. In every statewide election, California prepares voter information pamphlets in 10 languages – English, Spanish, Chinese, Hindi, Japanese, Khmer, Korean, Tagalog, Thai, and Vietnamese – for over 20 million registered voters. As the chief elections officer for the largest state in the nation, the California Secretary of State tests and approves all voting equipment for security, accuracy, reliability, and accessibility in order to ensure that every vote is counted as it was cast. The Secretary also ensures election laws and campaign disclosure requirements are enforced, maintains a statewide database of all registered voters, certifies the official lists of candidates for elections, tracks and certifies ballot initiatives, compiles election returns and certifies election results, educates California citizens about their voting rights, and promotes voter registration and participation.



Archives:

California's first legislature, meeting in 1849-50, charged the Secretary of State to receive "...all public records, registered maps, books, papers, rolls, documents and other writings . . . which appertain to or are in any way connected with the political history and past administration of the government of California." Today, the California State Archives continues to collect, catalog, preserve, and provide access to the historic records of state government and some local governments. The Archives collection is primarily comprised of records from California state agencies, the governor's office, the state legislature, and the State Supreme Court and Courts of Appeal. The California State Archives continues to serve in the spirit of those early instructions, providing a repository for the state's permanent governmental records as well as other materials documenting California history. The California State Archives serves a wide variety of researchers whose interests range from legislative intent and public policy to genealogy and railroad history in California. Archives staff continually organize and describe the records we receive to provide easier and faster access for researchers.



Business:

The Business Programs Division, the largest division of the Secretary of State's office, supports California Businesses by registering business entities and trademarks and enabling secured creditors to protect their financial interests. The Business Programs Division processes millions of business filings and information requests each year. The Secretary of State's office processes filings, maintains records and provides information to the public relating to business entities that include corporations, limited liability companies, limited partnerships, general partnerships, limited liability partnerships, and other business filings.



Political Reform:

The Political Reform Division helps make the political process more transparent by helping people monitor financing of state political campaigns and lobbying activities. Most candidates for state office, ballot measure committees, and anyone who lobbies the State Legislature and state agencies must file detailed financial disclosure statements with the Secretary of State.



Information Technology:

The Information Technology Division supports the business requirements of the Secretary of State by planning, developing, implementing, and maintaining innovative and effective business and information systems in active partnership with the Agency program divisions, vendors, and other agencies. ITD supports the entire Agency, made up of 8 unique divisions, which in turn serves a wide variety of external entities collectively referred to as stakeholders, including federal and state agencies, the state legislature, lobbyists, financial institutions, attorneys, county governments, media organizations, vendors, and the general public, among others.



Executive Division:

Outreach: The Executive Outreach team will support all public facing divisions within the Secretary of State agency by highlighting the programs and



services available within our office. This outreach includes, but is not limited to, special events, tabling at community events, and hosting a variety of educational opportunities. The Executive Outreach team will establish and maintain relationships with key stakeholders such as other government agencies and community-based organizations to share Secretary of State resources and information.

The Help America Vote Act (HAVA): Passed in 2002, by the United States Congress to make sweeping reforms to the nation's voting process. HAVA addresses improvements to voting systems and voter access that were identified following the 2000 election. HAVA created new mandatory minimum standards for states to follow in several key areas of election administration. The law provided funding to help states meet the new standards, replace voting systems and improve election administration. HAVA required that states implement such things as: provisional voting, updated and upgraded voting equipment, a statewide voter registration database, accessible voting, and voter identification procedures. Additionally, in 2018, 2020 and 2022, federal HAVA funding was authorized to states for election security.

VoteCal: a uniform, centralized, interactive, computerized voter registration database that is defined, maintained, and administered at the state level that was implemented to comply with Section 303 of HAVA (Public Law 107-252, 107th Congress) requirements.

The Office of Voting Systems Technology Assessment (OVSTA): The Office of Voting Systems Technology Assessment (OVSTA) was created in September 2005 to test, review, and certify voting system technology pursuant to HAVA and state law.

Policy, Planning, and Implementation: The PPI team ensures that statewide policies relating to the Secretary of State's office are implemented into programs in such a way that sets the program up for success. This includes identifying and coordinating resources and support, providing support for large-scale changes to existing processes, and planning for policy, programmatic, and fiscal sustainability. One of the main programs under the Policy, Planning, and Implementation team is the Voter's Choice Act (VCA), which was passed by the legislature as SB 450 in 2016 and was adopted in 2017. The SOS is charged with regulating and implementing the VCA election model, which provides voters with greater flexibility and convenience to vote and allows voters to choose how, when, and where to cast their ballot.

The Project Management Office (PMO) provides the framework to ensure agency projects are managed consistently and that the business needs of the divisions and programs drive the type of technology that needs to be applied. The PMO has adopted the project management practices, standards, policies, and methodologies specified in the State's Administrative Manual (SAM), State Information Management Manuals (SIMM), and Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK) as the basis of this framework. The PMO has assembled project management guidelines, procedural information, and other useful tools to facilitate future project development.



Management Services:

The Secretary of State's Management Services Division (MSD) performs a variety of administrative support functions, including but not limited to: business services, facilities management, administration of the Agency's contracts and procurement; building security, all aspects of human resources management, which include recruitment and retention, training and development, performance management, labor relations, benefits and payroll, health, safety, wellness, investigatory processes, and workforce and succession planning efforts, which are all critical programs to ensure the efficient and effective administrative operations of the Agency. In addition, MSD administers the Safe at Home program, which is an external facing program within MSD. The Safe at Home program is a confidential mail forwarding service provided to victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking as well as to reproductive health care facilities employees, volunteers, and patients. The statutory authority for the Safe at Home program is Government Code Sections 6205-6216. The primary purpose of the Safe at Home program is to enable state and local agencies to respond to requests for public records without disclosing the participant's confidential name change or residential address.



Goals and Objectives

The Secretary of State's goals and objectives, like the vision, are the desired result of the actions that will be taken. The goals serve to provide direction. They were carefully and thoughtfully developed to encompass the direction of each division to overall serve the mission of the entire agency. Each goal is meant to guide the Secretary of State's actions to achieve measurable outcomes. With the direction defined,

the objectives listed help begin the process of action. Objectives are the strategies that support the goals. The strategic goals and objectives directly support the vision and mission. They are stepping stones to measure the department's growth and success. Following are the goals for the SOS, what they mean, and the objectives that will serve as the roadmap for the next five years.





GOAL 1:

Provide Superior Service

Objective 1.1: Standardize external communication

Objective 1.2: Increase visibility and clarity about what we do

Objective 1.3: Improve delivery of customer-centered services



GOAL 2:

Promote Innovation and Foster a Sustainable Organization

Objective 2.1: Enhance Cybersecurity

Objective 2.2: Embrace and continuously improve technology

Objective 2.3: Improve business processes to achieve efficiency

Objective 2.4: Promote succession planning efforts



GOAL 3:

Improve Our Employee-Focused Work Culture

Objective 3.1: Enhance employee engagement

Objective 3.2: Embrace and invest in innovation

Objective 3.3: Expand workforce development

Objective 3.4: Encourage and Foster Collaboration

Objective 3.5: Cultivate a Cohesive and Inclusive Environment



GOAL 4:

Stimulate Civic Engagement

Objective 4.1: Promote participation in the electoral process

Objective 4.2: Expand access to electoral information

Objective 4.3: Collect, preserve and provide access to California's history and civic processes



Overview of SOS Strategic Initiatives



Voting: Strengthening California's Voting Environment

Ensure that California citizens have full access to the most convenient and accessible voting options so all citizens can exercise their great privilege to vote in a safe and secure environment. The Office of the Secretary of State makes an extraordinary effort to promote civic engagement and outreach and educate all Californians on the importance of voting.

Business: Optimizing California's Business Foundation

Ensure the foundation that allows California to be the 5th largest economy in the world to continue to prosper by maintaining and improving the business infrastructure, which allows California businesses to operate in a business friendly environment, using best-in-class business oversight methods, promote the creation of small businesses, which is the backbone of our economy, and continue to encourage businesses to operate within the boundaries of this State.

Archives: Full Exposure to the State's Archive Collections

Continue to harvest California's rich treasure chest of history for all to see, offer learning opportunities from our great historical experiences, apply the abundance of information to our future path forward and using innovative methods to reach all citizens.

Operational Efficiency: Optimal and Efficient Agency Operations

Achieve the state goals and management of the Office of the Secretary of State in the most efficient and manner consistent with best-practices including the optimization of technology, a standardized and up-to-date financial infrastructure, and the full utilization of information systems solidly built on facts.

Optimal Services: Access to Public Resources

Ensure compliance with requirements set by our regulators and provide transparent information that is easy to find, open, and accountable to customers, stakeholders, and other service-users.



Agency Initiatives and Activities



Voter Environment:

Strengthening California's Voting Environment

The Secretary of State's Office strives to promote inclusivity and accessibility in order to create an election system designed to allow citizens to perform their most basic civic duty with ease.

Overarching Goals

1. Stimulate Civic Engagement
2. Provide Superior Service

Activities

Provide useful educational and non-partisan information that voters can rely in making their electoral decisions

1. The Elections Division assists voters in making informed decisions and prepare for upcoming elections by providing vital election information including election deadlines, voter registration information, candidate statements, voter rights as a California voter, and other useful information such as:
 - Voter Information Guide
 - Voter Information Hotline (800) 345-VOTE (8683)
 - Vote.ca.gov
2. The Elections Division is charged with creating transparency of California Elections by:
 - Tracking Ballot Initiatives- verifying the state measures before being placed on the official ballot
 - Certifying official lists of candidates running for state offices
 - Coordinates tabulation of votes from each county in California and produces the official Statements of Vote

Engage and Educate Californians in the democratic process

1. **New Citizens Program:** The Elections staff is responsible for ordering new citizen (statue of liberty icon) VRCS as necessary and maintaining a supply in the Elections Division. When requested by the Executive team, the Elections staff will fulfill outreach orders including voter registration materials and tabling supplies in preparation for Executive's attendance at the new citizen ceremonies.
2. **UOCAVA: Military and Overseas Voters Program:** This program aims to encourage registered military and overseas voters (UOCAVA or MOV) to vote on Election Day and to educate unregistered but eligible UOCAVA voters on how to register and request their vote-by-mail ballots.
<https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/voter-registration/military-overseas-voters>



Voter Environment (Continued):

Strengthening California's Voting Environment

The Secretary of State's Office strives to promote inclusivity and accessibility in order to create an election system designed to allow citizens to perform their most basic civic duty with ease.

3. Student Voter Registration Program: The Executive Outreach and Voter Education teams partner with high schools in the state, to increase registration and pre-registration of eligible students. To promote civic engagement, the Executive Outreach Team works in partnership with the California Department of Education (CDE), District Superintendents and Administrators, and provides resources for students to ensure voter education is prioritized in California schools. The Executive Outreach team organizes programming and resources such as High School Voter Education Weeks, the High School Student Poll Worker Program and public service announcements. <https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/high-school-programs#hsview>

4. Student Mock Elections: As students learn about the candidates and issues, they discover how government and politics affect every part of their lives. They gain firsthand knowledge of how citizens make their voices heard in our democracy and experience the power of their votes when they are joined by thousands of California students who will vote in the California Student Mock Election this year. <https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/studentmockelection>

5. The California Students Vote Project: is a first of its kind partnership in the nation where all major institutions of higher education in California have solidified commitments to partner with the Secretary of State's office and encourage student civic engagement efforts, in order to promote a democracy that is more inclusive of student voices. The California Students Vote Project offers a University Ballot Bowl friendly competition in which all of California's major higher education institutions—the California Community College (CCC), California State University (CSU), University of California (UC), and the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities (AICCU)—are invited to compete to register the most students to vote.

- <https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/castudentvote>
- <https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/ballot-bowl>
- <https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/student-voting-programs>
- <https://www.sos.ca.gov/administration/agency-reports/student-voter-registration-agency-reports>

6. Democracy at Work: California businesses, government agencies, and nonprofit organizations to partner with the Secretary of State's Office in the Democracy at Work program to encourage employees and customers register and vote.



Voter Environment (Continued):

Strengthening California's Voting Environment

The Secretary of State's Office strives to promote inclusivity and accessibility in order to create an election system designed to allow citizens to perform their most basic civic duty with ease.

Address and implement improvements to voting systems and voter access so that all Californians have a smooth experience participating in Elections

- 1. The Help America Vote Act (HAVA):** provides funding to county election officials for improvements to the administration of elections.
- 2. Ensure voting is accessible:** HAVA confirms all voting locations in California are accessible to voters by partnering with the California Department of Rehabilitation to provide annual training, guidelines, checklists, and funding for polling place accessibility.
- 3. Educates voters** – HAVA ensures voters know about voting procedures, their rights, and how to use voting technology through the publication of the Voter Bill of Rights and other documents.
- 4. Ensure voters can report election issues** – HAVA provides a toll-free hotline, to report fraud or violations, gain general information, and access information about their own voter registration status.

Ensure safe and secure voting technology to safeguard elections for Californians

- 1. Ensure voting technology is accessible to all California voters:** OVSTA tests all voting technology for compliance with HAVA, the Americans with Disabilities Act, Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, and the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0.
- 2. Ensures that voting technology is up-to-date and secure:** OVSTA administers Voting System Replacement Funding, granted to counties for voting technology modernization.

Ensure that all voters have convenient accessibility to efficiently register to vote and ensures voter registration accuracy.

- 1.** Ensures voter registration accuracy by checking every new and updated registration against death records, local obituaries, and other local county sources like coroner's reports.
- 2. California Online Voter Registration (COVR):** VoteCal provides a publicly available website that allows voters to register conveniently online <https://registertovote.ca.gov>.
- 3. My Voter Status (MVS):** Provides voters a resource to check the status of their registration and their voting history <https://voterstatus.sos.ca.gov>.
- 4. "Where's My Ballot?" Ballot Tracking:** Allows voters in all counties to sign up to receive emails, texts, and/or phone messages as their VBM ballot is mailed and processed by their county elections official <https://wheresmyballot.sos.ca.gov>.



Voter Environment (Continued):

Strengthening California's Voting Environment

The Secretary of State's Office strives to promote inclusivity and accessibility in order to create an election system designed to allow citizens to perform their most basic civic duty with ease.

- 5. New Motor Voter Program:** VoteCal partners with the DMV to implement automatic voter registration for eligible voters who apply for or renew a driver license or identification card, or change their address through the DMV.
- 6. Voter Status Alerts:** VoteCal ensures voters are alerted to changes in their voter record confirms a voter's activity by email to help protect their voter registration in the event their registration may have been changed without their consent.
- 7. County Training** - VoteCal provides regular training to county election officials and their staff on processes, procedures, and best practices to ensure consistency and accuracy of the system.



Business:

Optimizing California's Business Foundation

"Making it Easier to do Business in California". The Secretary of State's business services are the first stop for California businesses to register and begin their journey.

Overarching Goals

1. Provide Superior Service
2. Promote Innovation and Foster a Sustainable Organization

Activities

Support California's businesses in all their endeavors with resources and tools they need to be successful

1. **Bizfile:** bizfile California is the Secretary of State's online portal to help businesses file, search, and order business records quickly and conveniently from a single location. bizfile California also provides resources related to starting a business, trademarks, UCC financing statements, and other tax liens and immigration consultants.

Business filing made easy and convenient for California entrepreneurs and business owners

1. **eForms Online:** a service that was added as a result of COVID to allow customers to upload their Business Documents and submit and pay for them electronically. Our staff in the back office must complete the review and enter the data into our mainframes but staff are able to do this while teleworking.



Archives:

Full Exposure to that State's Archival Function

For the benefit of California citizens, the Secretary of State strives to be the premiere holder of CA records, a primary resource for research concerning the documentation of California history, a critical source for those interested in genealogy, the factual documentation of California's historic milestones, (administer statewide records management) and many more documents of facts on California's foundation that allows the State to be the 5th largest economy in the world. We are driven by the fundamental principle that nonpartisan complete history and facts will guide opportunities for future development and continued growth opportunities for all.

Overarching Goals

1. Stimulate Civic Engagement
2. Provide Superior Service

Activities

Collecting more inclusive stories and facts for all citizens and heritage backgrounds with emphasis on underserved communities including Mexican, Chinese, Native Americans, and African American ethnic groups to allow greater exposure to the contributions of all citizens as compared to past and current efforts.

1. Oral History program
2. Archives Education program
3. Leveraging strategic partnerships throughout the state to ensure more inclusive and culturally competent and accurate reflection of California's history

Promote education and outreach to all citizens through special events to reach those unaware of California's rich history and their historical contributions toward it.

1. Heritage month highlights of historical contributions of diverse Californians
2. Curated exhibits highlighting the significant contributions of Californians
3. Virtual and in-person engagement

Providing access to genealogical resources to connect people to their family history through the Archives Reference Services program.

1. Free video resources and research guides offered to the public
2. Strategic partnerships with state and national genealogical groups that provide a wealth of data such as Ancestry and Family Search

Partner with the Department of Education to formalize information to CA citizens in the public school system regarding historical facts which will future opportunities for California's growth.



Operational Efficiency:

Optimal and Efficient Agency Operations

The Secretary of State's office prioritizes innovative and proactive solution-based thinking in order to preserve operational efficiency and provide the most effective customer service for our California constituents.

Overarching Goals

1. Excellent Customer Service
2. Promote Innovation and Foster a Sustainable Organization

Activities

Develop and manage value-added human resources policies and programs, and provide expert consultation, services, and solutions in an efficient and customer-focused manner.

1. Cultivate an environment of learning and development to broaden skill set levels, coaching, and mentoring to enhance California's workforce.
2. Fosters a healthy workforce to be an employer of choice through effective recruitment efforts to secure talent-needs that will further advance and support the mission critical goals and objectives of the organization.
3. Provide opportunities for employees to gain skill sets through work assignment collaborations, personal and professional training offerings, job shadowing to ensure that knowledge is transferred and learned, and mitigate key person dependencies to carry-on institutional planning.
4. Promotes staff engagement and collaboration to support a solution orientated and proactive environment in support of customer service excellence.
5. Support agencywide efforts of workforce and succession planning to hire and retain a qualified workforce; ensure the right people are in the right positions; and develop future leaders of the organization to effectively meet the organization's mission.
6. Ensure effective and seamless administration of the state's contract and procurement process to secure the needed goods and services to support our critical business operations throughout the agency.
7. Administer the agency's building operations, space design and layout, realty, safety, and occupational health programs, as well as support services programs that promote a safe, healthy, and high-quality work environment.



Operational Efficiency (Continued):

Optimal and Efficient Agency Operations

The Secretary of State's office prioritizes innovative and proactive solution-based thinking in order to preserve operational efficiency and provide the most effective customer service for our California constituents.

8. Manage mailroom operations and agency-wide reproduction activities to support the needs of the agency.
9. Perform outreach efforts for the Safe at Home program to support opportunities to advance program role and oversight based on legislative mandates.

Build a quality and comprehensive technology infrastructure, establish and maintain an effective operational environment, and deliver quality, timely, and reliable technology services.

1. Standardize communications to promote consistency and clarity for all users
2. Promote convenient and accessible modernized technology
3. Ensuring tech is sound and safeguarded from external threats
4. Increase access and public awareness about the services available



Optimal Services:

Access to Public Resources

Ensures compliance with requirements set by our regulators and provides transparent information that is easy to find, open and accountable to customers, stakeholders, and other service-users.

Overarching Goals

1. Provide superior service

Activities

Foster trust in our democracy by facilitating the transparent and accurate disclosure of information, resources, and finances.

1. Ensure that receipts and expenditures in election campaigns are fully and truthfully disclosed in order that the voters may be fully informed, and the activities of lobbyists are regulated, and their finances disclosed.
2. The Political Reform Division (PRD) makes this information available to the public in a timely and easy to interpret manner.
3. To promote transparency, PRD makes all information filed available online for everyone to access, from first-time voters to experienced politicians.
4. PRD assists California lobbyists with filings and registrations and ensures these records are accessible to the public.
 - **The California Automated Lobbyist and Campaign Contribution and Expenditure Search System (CAL-ACCESS)** is the public's window into California's campaign disclosure and lobbying financial activity, providing financial information supplied by state candidates, donors, lobbyists, lobbyist employers, and others. The CAL-ACCESS Replacement System (CARS) Project will implement a new data driven system replacing the existing forms driven system.
<https://powersearch.sos.ca.gov/quick-search.php>

Provide public free and accessible resources and services to better serve Californians

1. **Safe at Home:** The Safe at Home program provides victims of domestic violence, stalking, sexual assault, and human trafficking, as well as reproductive health care workers a way to thwart abusers from finding them at home, at work, and at school. Safe at Home participants are assigned a substitute mailing address. This address is accepted by California state, county, and city government agencies in lieu of a residential or other mailing address where the victim can be personally tracked down, keeping the residence address confidential and out of the hands of their abusers. This service is provided free of charge to California residents who qualify as participants.



Optimal Services (Continued):

Access to Public Resources

Ensures compliance with requirements set by our regulators and provides transparent information that is easy to find, open and accountable to customers, stakeholders, and other service- users.

- 2. Advance Health Care Directive Registry:** maintains AHCDs, which allow a person to indicate to their loved ones and medical providers their medical treatment preferences if they cannot speak or make decisions for themselves. The AHCD may also designate someone else to make decisions regarding medical treatment. AHCDs and related information can be provided upon request to the registrant's health care provider, public guardian, or legal representative.
- 3. Domestic Partners Registry:** registers same-sex couples regardless of the age of the partners, and opposite-sex couples in which one partner is at least 62 years old, as domestic partners in California when they file a Declaration of Domestic Partnership.
- 4. Notary Services:** The Notary Public Section appoints and commissions eligible notaries public. A notary public is a public official who performs valuable services to the legal, business, financial and real estate communities by certifying or witnessing signatures on official documents. The Notary Public Section also certifies to the authenticity of notaries public and public officials' signatures on documents used in foreign countries.

